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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1442
INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 2094
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9449
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 1856
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 5427
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 2578
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1999
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9778
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 1717
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 1543
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3512
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 5756
RUEHBN/AMCONSUL MELBOURNE 6303
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH 4566
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 4526
RUEAHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR H1N1 MONITORING GROUP, AIAG FOR WINN; STATE
PLEASE PASS DHHS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KFLU AEMR ASEC CASC KFLO TBIO KSAF KPAO PREL
PINR, AMGT, MG, AS
SUBJECT: MGSF01 AUSTRALIA H1N1 SITREP APRIL 29 2009

REF: A. SECSTATE 42324
 B. SECSTATE 41745
 C. CANBERRA 415

¶11. (SBU) The following is the latest SITREP covering Australia's response to the H1N1 outbreak.

¶12. (SBU) Government Response: The GOA increased its pandemic response phase to DELAY under the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza (AHMPPI - available at www.flupandemic.gov.au). Health Minister Roxon declared H1N1 a quarantineable disease under the Quarantine Act 1908, a legal step necessary should the government need to impose mandatory quarantine on suspected or confirmed H1N1 sufferers. Currently, if an arriving traveler is screened by quarantine and health officials and considered to be of concern, they are asked to travel directly to their home or hotel and self-quarantine. If severely ill, they will be assessed and transported to a medical facility on a case-by-case basis. New South Wales health authorities also declared H1N1 notifiable, which enables state medical responders to enforce quarantines if needed. The Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) which is the coordination group for federal and state governments on policy, is scheduled to meet May 1 in Hobart, and will ratify joint pandemic protocols. Press reports claimed the government was exploring options to prohibit arrival in Australia for aircraft and vessels in the event a true pandemic emerges, but stressed no such requirement currently exists. The Department of Foreign Affairs advised Australians to "reconsider" travel to Mexico due to the severe H1N1 outbreak there.

¶13. (SBU) According to a source at Qantas, the airline has implemented GOA-mandated procedures for passengers in-bound to Australia. So far they have reported 14 passengers as having flu-like symptoms, but to date all have been cleared of having H1N1. There has not yet been a large number of passengers calling to inquire about overseas travel; Qantas is referring them to DFAT's travel advisory website. Qantas

has not seen an upsurge in passengers requesting rebooking or cancelling international travel, and since the news broke late last week, there has not been a drop in sales for international flights. Virgin Blue told us they haven't seen any impact on bookings yet but they are "expecting" a "backlash", probably within the next few days, that will reduce international bookings. They are getting quite a few calls from passengers who are asking about travel to North America, and like Qantas are referring them to the GOA's web site.

¶4. (SBU) Angela Pratt, Chief of Staff to Health Minister Nicola Roxon, told embassy today that Australia has large stockpiles of antiviral medicines (DOHA confirmed 8.7 million courses of either Tamiflu or Relenza) - one of the largest in the world in per capita terms. Based on that and the fact that Australia has not yet recorded any cases, they are not Othat Australia has not yet recorded any cases, they are not looking to buy any more at the moment. Pratt said CSL has already begun working on a H1N1 vaccine, but how long it would be to finish production and distribute it widely enough to have an effect was unclear. Pratt said internal GOA coordination was "going well". There are two key bodies. The National Crisis Committee is an interagency group at the Federal government level, including DOHA, Attorney Generals and Customs (due to border issues), among others. The other is the Australian Health Protection Committee, comprised of the chief medical officers for Australia and each of Australia's eight state and territory governments. Currently the NCC is meeting once per day, AHPC twice a day. ABC news reported that

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GlaxoSmithKline is preparing to boost production of Relenza in Melbourne by 5 million doses over the next three months.

¶5. (SBU) Case Count: According to DOHA's National Incident Room, Australia is investigating 90 suspect cases, but has not confirmed any cases of H1N1 as of April 29. Of particular concern are 22 Australians who traveled on a flight with three New Zealand nationals who tested positive for H1N1.

¶6. (SBU) Post Actions: Post convened the EAC on April 29 (septel), to discuss additional measures, including publishing information on Australia's screening measures, and reviewed medical resources in the event the outbreak worsens. Charge then explained U.S. and Australian government actions and answered questions at a town hall meeting for post employees.

¶7. (SBU) Consular Issues: As of April 29, there are no ACS cases involving quarantine or isolation of U.S. citizens.

¶8. (SBU) Public Diplomacy: H1N1 continues to be a top news story of the day. All major media outlets covered the steps taken by GOA and in other countries to contain the virus. ABC news radio conducted an interview with an Australian veterinarian practicing in the U.S. who cautioned against the use of the term "swine flu" and explained that the disease was now a human virus and was not caused by eating pork products. Media concern focused heavily on confirmed cases in New Zealand.

¶9. (SBU) Agriculture Issues: As of April 29, the GOA has not banned any pork imports from any location, and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service has advised government that it will follow guidelines set by the World Animal Health Organization (OIE).

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